commercial, industrial, and educational record, of which we may justly be proud, even though politically we have left the territory very much where it was, and have not brought it into any intimate relation with the mother (may we say step-mother?) country.

To a great extent this has been due to the difficulty of dealing with abnormal situations to which our common legislative and administrative methods do not apply. Mail service and all other functions of the Government in Alaska cause an expenditure out of all proportion to the service required and performed, and consequently Congress has been unwilling to provide the usual territorial machinery. In other parts of the Union the pioneers of new sections of the country have always taken themselves the first steps towards organization, camps have grown into towns, and townships into counties, but in Alaska the circumstances are entirely different. Its population now foots up 32,052, divided as follows:

Whites	4,294	Mongolians	2,287
Mixed (Russian and natives)	1,829	All others	112
Natives	23,530		
Total			32,052

Though in the summer the canning and whaling industries swell the number of white people in Alaska to four thousand, the resident American citizens do not number much over one-fourth that number, and even these are much scattered, affording but an unsatisfactory basis upon which to build even the most primitive political structure.

Upon the whole it would appear that until the country gives proof of further development, and until it shall have been decided whether any further revenue will flow from Alaska as an offset to expenditures, we have granted enough, and we can complacently face the question: "What have we done with Alaska in twenty-five years of possession?"

IVAN PETROFF.

CONTRACTS AND THE CURRENCY.

IN DISCUSSING the financial problem as affected by the silver coinage, the friends of an honest currency are too prone to overlook the fact that gold fluctuates in value, as well as silver. Debtors have been cheated with the rise of gold, and very sadly cheated, too, just as with silver coming to the front creditors will likewise be cheated. When silver was demonetized the creditors gained, and by the rise in gold values our national debt, while it was nominally being paid off at a tremendous rate, actually increased—measured as commodities, which is the true method of estimating it—from the time of the close of the war until well along into the eighties.

If stability of value is the quality that gives character to an "honest dollar," then a gold dollar cannot lay claim to the title any more than a silver one can. It is only somewhat less dishonest. Just now one robs Peter to pay Paul, and the other endeavors to rob Paul, at a somewhat heavier rate, to pay Peter. The silver men say in effect to the "sound money" men: You fixed the law once so that we had to pay you more than we owed you. We intend to fix it now so that we shall pay you less than we owe you.

It is a sorry game, that of cheating by law. All will suffer in the long run, both debtor and creditor. Ought there not to be enough fair-minded, honest-hearted men in Congress to agree upon some measure that should assure the equitable fulfilment of contracts? If not; if the American people are to be divided into two opposing factions on the question of the currency, each endeavoring to see which can get the advantage of the other in a "skin game," then the outlook does not seem very encouraging for the future of America.

Would not the desired end be secured by a simple enactment to the effect that, in the fulfilment of all contracts involving the payment of money, payment should be made of an amount representing the purchasing power of the sum agreed upon at the time the contract was made. The purchasing power would be determined by the market value of certain staples at a given date. To enable the easy and accurate computation of this, the Secretary of the Treasury might be instructed to have monthly lists of the prices of these staples prepared and posted in all public places throughout the country. It would thus be shown that, upon such a date, one dollar was good for so much corn, so much wheat, so much cotton, so much wool, so much pig iron, so much flour, so much coal, etc. By striking an average the abstract purchasing power of a dollar on the date in question would be shown. If in the next month's statement any fluctuations of a marked character should be manifest, and these were not counterbalanced by other fluctuations, then the dollar's abstract purchasing power would be represented by a different average.

For instance, if on June 6, 1891, Smithson agrees to pay Johnson $1,000 six months from date in return for merchandise bought of the latter, then under this rule the $1,000 to be paid on January 6, 1892, would mean a sum corresponding to the purchasing power of $1,000 six months before. If the purchasing power had diminished, then more than $1,000 would be required in payment; if it had increased, less than $1,000 would be needed.

For instance, if the purchasing power of a dollar were represented by 98 on June 6, and on January 6 it had increased to 102, then, a dollar being worth more, it would not take so many of them to pay the debt, and $960 would satisfy it, for it would purchase just as much value in goods as $1,000 did then.

In practice, of course, under ordinary circumstances the fluctuation would not be likely to be anywhere near so great as in the example given, for the changes in the values of so many staples would largely counteract each other, and the average that would represent the abstract purchasing power of the dollar would probably change but little in so short a space of time.

In the same way, stability in the value of wages would be secured by such a plan, for the workman would be paid an amount corresponding to the purchasing power of his wages at the time he was hired.

Under such a system it is conceivable that the standard of the currency might be lead, or pig iron, as well as gold or silver. However the currency might fluctuate, the standard for the payment of contracts would remain the same—the purchasing power of the sum agreed upon at the date of contract. Neither debtor nor creditor could then be cheated, and, with a stable standard of payment assured, there then would be no motive for maintaining an unstable currency.

SYLVESTER BAXTER.